



TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

Prince George's County, Maryland

Incorporated in 1896 ~ Sixth Oldest Municipality in PG County

WORKSESSION MINUTES FEBRUARY 4, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, Councilmembers (CMs) Almoguera, Dennison and Eddy. Also present was Chief of Police Antolik, Code Compliance Director Solomon and Clerk Harper. Town Administrator (TA) Murphy participated via Skype.

1. MAYOR

Agenda: An executive session was added to discuss a personnel matter.

Announcements: There were none

Calendar: No changes were made to the council calendar.

Minutes: On a motion by CM Dennison, and second by CM Kulpa-Eddy, the January 22 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

Department reports: CM Dennison announced an upcoming Presidents' Day reception and Boys & Girls Club registration. MPT Wilkinson reported that he attended Park & Planning presentation on extending the Little Paint Branch hiker-biker trail from Cherry Hill Road in College Park to the Beltsville Community Center. He learned that the trail is proposed to be built on the west side of Cherry Hill Road and the north side of Sellman Road because the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) is opposed to building it on their property. The most difficult section will be the bridge over the Beltway, which is very narrow. In other news, Public Works prepared the roads for what turned out to be minor snow events. The ice melt did not work well during the first snow event, because it was too cold.

Mayor Calvo reported on a recent Four Cities Coalition meeting in College Park. It featured presentations on the cleanup of an old nuclear waste site at Landover and reductions of career fire fighters at the Branchville fire station, and FBI headquarters relocation. The Four Cities Coalition plans to take a position opposing Branchville staffing cuts, but will hold off with a letter until a meeting with Prince George's County Fire Chief Bashoor has taken place. All four cities strongly favor relocation of FBI headquarters to Greenbelt Metro Station, and plan to write a joint letter of support. Other topics of discussion included the impact of the reproperty reassessments on city budgets and a Pepco tree trimming MOU.

CM Kulpa-Eddy added that County Councilmember Olson's Aide Danielle Glaros informed the Four Cities members of a proposed bill that would reduce the impact fee for housing units in transit overlay zones (TOD). The goal is to promote transit-oriented development and construction of more apartment units for students and professionals. Further, the City of Greenbelt has purchased a new bucket truck, which can be rented for a fee. MPT Wilkinson noted that the new Four Cities street sweeper was in Berwyn Heights for the last 2 weeks and produced noticeably cleaner streets than with the old sweeper.

Mayor Calvo said that he attended a meeting of the Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) last week. A College Park based non-profit dedicated to stopping incinerators and promoting zero waste gave a presentation on how local governments can reduce their waste. He found their ideas interesting and may want them to come to Berwyn Heights in the future. At the same meeting, representatives of the Governor's Office gave a presentation on the proposed budget. A Prince George's County projects proposed for funding included the Pop's Park renovation at \$91,000. Further, he was selected as chair of the PGCMA scholarship program after expressing the opinion that awarding a few \$1,000 scholarships is not the best use of this money to promote education in the County. He plans to restructure the program to put the money to better use.

MPT Wilkinson added that the College Park Academy, scheduled to open this fall, is now accepting applications. It will initially be housed in the old St. Ignace Elementary School and then move to a renovated building that formerly housed the Friends Community School on old Calvert Road.

Citizen comments: Mayor Calvo received a comment expressing opposition to the construction of new sidewalks and a comment complaining that he has a problem with rental homes. MPT Wilkinson received a comment about recycling old denim for use as an insulator in home construction. Clerk Harper forwarded a comment from Ray Smith about the potential safety hazard posed by an old traffic light mount at the corner of Greenbelt Road and 63rd Avenue.

Code Compliance budget request: Mayor Calvo welcomed Director of Code Compliance Sonja Solomon for a presentation of her budget request. Ms. Solomon outlined by outlining the functions, accomplishments and goals of her department. Among the accomplishments of the last fiscal year is a new high in rental license revenue totaling \$57,200 from 191 rental units. The number of rental units has gone up consistently over recent years from 112 in 2010, to 130 in 2011, to 177 in 2012 year, rental units peaked at 223, but have since gone down. Another accomplishment was the purchase of a new code car, a Ford Escape S for a slightly lower budgeted price of \$20,000. The Code Department has also been able to increase its productivity while remaining within budget, mainly by streamlining processes. Currently, the focus is on improving coordination with the Police and Public Works Department.

Ms. Solomon then presented options for cutting the Code Compliance budget and generate new revenue in the coming fiscal year, as instructed by the Council. The best way to generate new revenues is to raise the rental license fee from \$300 to \$400, which would raise an additional \$19,100. Mayor Calvo commented that the increase in the rental license fee must be tied to the cost of administering the rental program. He asked if this calculation has been made for this proposed increase. Ms. Solomon said such a calculation has not been made, but is based on how much staff time is devoted to the program. It is about 95% of the code officer's and clerk's time, and perhaps 10% of her time. She will consult with TA Murphy to come up with a formal cost calculation. Another option to increase revenues is to go back on County permits for new plumbing and electric installations, which could raise as much as \$6,200. Most of this money would come from businesses and a small amount from residents.

Ms. Solomon said that she is not requesting any increases in her FY 2014 budget. Instead, the focus is on identifying budget cuts of 5% and 10%. Code has already met the 5% reduction in this fiscal year because her previous clerk and one of two part-time officers left. This generated savings of approximately \$5,000. While she was able to hire another code clerk, the position was vacant for a time, and the second part-time officer position has remained vacant. Mayor Calvo said that the code officer qualifies as a salary lapse but not as budget cut, unless Ms. Solomon plans to cut part-time hours or positions accordingly. Ms. Solomon replied this is indeed what she proposes.

Mayor Calvo said that the budget request shows a \$10,500 cut obtained from a reduction in part-time hours, which is closer to 10% of the \$117,000 Code Department total budget. He asked if Ms. Solomon has identified other line items that can be cut. Ms. Solomon said that she could cut the postage appropriation by \$2,500 because the cost of mailing notifications has decreased substantially since dropping certified letters. Vehicle maintenance could be cut by \$700 because the new code car has a lower maintenance and repair cost. Dues & conferences can be cut \$300, communications by \$300, and abatements (contracted out) by \$250.

Mayor Calvo said that the non-staff cuts just outlined amount to \$4,050, leaving only around \$2,000 to be cut from part-time hours for a 5% reduction. This equals cutting 2 hours per week from the total of 20 per week currently budgeted for 2 part-time officers. To achieve a 10% budget cut, part-time officer hours could be reduced by an additional 6 hours. However, this would leave the Code Department short-staffed. Currently, the department operates with one part-time officer averaging 10 hours per week, and a clerk who averages around half the 15 hours per week allotted for the position. This means the Department is still performing all the additional responsibilities it has been given over the years.

MPT Wilkinson sought clarification about \$6,200 in additional revenue that could be obtained from instituting a fee for electrical and mechanical permits. Ms. Solomon explained that the Town would piggyback onto the County permits for this type of work, charging the same amount. This would impact mostly commercial establishments, which are charged between \$230 - \$750 for such permits. Mayor Calvo suggested another source for additional revenue is an increase in fine

rental and other violations. He thinks this would be fairer than raising rental fees, which affects compliant and non-compliant home-owners alike.

At 8:30 p.m., the Council took a 5 minute break.

Police budget presentation: Chief Antolik gave a presentation of the Police Department budget request. He said that he would like to retain a fully-staffed department with 8 full-time officers, 1 part-time officer, 1 clerk and 2 volunteer public safety aides. This would enable the Department to continue to provide protection and keep crime low. As in past years, he is requesting funding for 1 new police car at a cost of \$23,600, plus outfitting and painting for an additional \$10,000. He also requests funding to purchase a new server at a cost of \$3,200 as the old server was damaged during a 2012 derecho, and 5 new ruggedized laptops at a cost of \$8,750.

Chief Antolik continued that his budget also includes a 5% and 10% budget cut option. He proposed to achieve a 5% cut by not filling an upcoming vacancy in the department for a savings of \$47,500, and instead add 30 hours per week to the part-time officer position. The part-time officer would continue to administer the camera program at 10 hours/week. Further, it is proposed to lease purchase a new server and replace only 2 laptops for a savings of \$6,240. Another \$14,250 can be shaved from various line items to come up with budget cuts totaling \$34,000. To achieve a 10% reduction, it is proposed to eliminate the soon-to-be vacant position, but using the part-time officer for only 10 hours per week to administer the speed camera program. An additional \$10,300 could be obtained by cutting line items, for a total savings of \$64,000.

Mayor Calvo asked whether the requested budget of \$673,100 reflects Chief Antolik's best judgment on what the FY 2014 budget should look like. Chief Antolik apart from the already noted adjustments in salary and capital outlays < 500, he might make minor changes in the training and uniforms line items. Ideally, he also like to send officers out for more training. Currently, all necessary training is done in-house. Other cuts proposed in the FY 2014 budget include:

- postage -\$50 using email instead of letters to notify residents;
- supplies -\$1,000 using previous years average expenditures;
- dues & conferences -\$500 forgoing out-of-state conferences;
- training -\$500 in-house, on-site training;
- travel -\$300;
- miscellaneous -\$1,000 using previous years average expenditures;
- books & periodicals -\$300 purchasing only updates to required law books, using online resources;
- gas & oil -\$2,100 TA Murphy provides cost estimates using previous years expenditures; Police attempts to curtail usage of vehicles by commuting in per cars, car pooling to conferences and training, walking more during patrols, and avoiding idling.
- communications -\$1,000 using Secret Service funds to help finance new cell phones and tablets;
- telephones -\$500 using previous years expenditures;
- capital outlay <500 -\$500 using previous years expenditures;
- capital outlay >500 -\$6,240 purchasing only 2 new laptops of less expensive brand;
- uniforms -\$2,500 using previous years expenditures.

Mayor Calvo commented the only difference in the 5% cut and 10% cut options in the requested budget are in salaries and FICA, which is dependent on how hours the current part-time speed camera officer is scheduled to work. However, other line items should be affected by whether this officer works 10 or 40 hours per week. A full-time officer would receive health insurance and other benefits and is eligible for a take-home vehicle. Chief Antolik may want to review his budget this in mind.

Mayor Calvo further observed that an 8th officer gives the Police Department the flexibility to double up patrols during Friday and Saturday nights, or to cover shifts if an officer is out sick or on vacation. He would like Chief Antolik to think about what trade-offs to make if the Town had to get by with 7 officers, it continue 24 hour coverage or keep double coverage on weekends Chief Antolik said his preference is to have 24 hour coverage. Currently, he is using the the time officer for 30 hours per week to cover gaps in service.

MPT Wilkinson asked if this employee is eligible for benefits since he works more than 28 hours/week. TA Murphy said that an employee is eligible for benefits if scheduled to work 28 hours/week on a regular basis. This officer is not regularly scheduled and therefore not eligible. CM Kulpa-Eddy asked if the Town should support proposed state legislation that would allow civilian personnel to issue speed camera tickets, as recommended by some municipalities. Mayor Calvo and Chief Antolik said they prefer to have an officer issue tickets since that is what they told residents when they initiated the program. CM Kulpa-Eddy asked if the appropriate \$850 for National Night Out is realistic. Last year much more than that was spent. Chief Antolik said that the budgeted amount does not cover expenses, but the Police Department counts on fundraising to make up the difference.

Mayor Calvo thanked Chief Antolik for the presentation and commended the department for a good year. He thinks the staffing of the Police Department will be the single most difficult decision the Council has to make in next year's budget.

Greenbelt Metro Area Sector Plan update: CM Kulpa-Eddy said that the Council had a concern that the Town's recommendation to reduce lanes and/or add a strip in the middle of Greenbelt Road between 62nd Avenue and Kenilworth Avenue was not adopted in the sector plan. The Prince George's County Planning Department has since explained what provisions of the sector plan would address pedestrian safety improvements along Greenbelt Road. However, she is not sure this satisfies all Councilmembers.

MPT Wilkinson said the sector plan includes other specific recommendations, such as the diverging diamond for the Greenbelt Road/Kenilworth Avenue intersection. He sees no reason why a 30-year master plan cannot address specifically the problem of pedestrian safety at the intersection of Greenbelt Road and 63rd Avenue. It should be a safe landing in the middle for Greenbelt Middle School students and other pedestrians when they are crossing 9 lanes of traffic. He would like the Council to take a position supporting a pedestrian landing and ask CM Olson's office to help lobby for it.

CM Kulpa-Eddy suggested asking only for including a pedestrian landing at this intersection, and not for reducing lanes. The Council agreed. Mayor Calvo will send a letter communicating this position to Park & Planning before their next worksession.

Pepco tree-trimming MOU: Mayor Calvo said that the Town has obtained the copy of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the City of Greenbelt signed with Pepco in 2002 that puts in place a procedure for consulting with the city before trees are trimmed. The procedure requires Pepco to provide dates and places where trimming is to occur, as well as contact information for personnel or contractors who would perform the work. It also requires Pepco to employ a licensed tree expert to inspect trees before and after tree work is scheduled and to be on-site during the trimming to ensure that the work is done in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Mayor Calvo said he would like the Town to have a similar agreement so that it can hold Pepco more accountable. However, Greenbelt's city manager believes that other municipalities already have this type of agreement. He would like to check the Town's files to see if there is a record of such an MOU. The Council agreed that the Town should pursue a similar agreement, if none has been signed.

Nothing was discussed under 2. Public Safety, and 3. Public Works.

4. ADMINISTRATION

Bulletin cover: The following items were approved for the March Bulletin cover: spring theme, headlines on Mayor & Town Council budget message, and a workshop.

5. CODE COMPLIANCE

WSSC sewer repair update: CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that she attended a WSSC meeting on January 24, which provided an overview of projects that will be undertaken in the next 4 years. WSSC is under a court order to repair or reline its sewer lines by 2017. Berwyn Heights has 2 manholes in the Indian Creek sub valley that are affected: one near Greenbelt Road and one halfway between the hockey rink and Lake Artemesia park. To reach the manhole along the trail, WSSC would have to construct an access path for heavy machinery, which may require removal of trees. Relining of sewers is planned for 62nd Avenue between Ruata and Seminole Streets, and for 58th Avenue between Berwyn Road and Pontiac Street. This does not require digging trenches, as the sewer lines will be accessed through existing manholes.

Lastly, WSSC will be evaluating its water mains in 2014-15. In particular, they will look at Ruatan and Seminole Streets, 57th and 58th Avenue where the Town just renovated the road surface. Unfortunately, streets will have to be dug up to repair these lines. Construction may begin in 2015. Mayor Calvo expressed frustration because WSSC had promised the Town it would not have to do anything to these sections of road for 20 years.

Nothing was discussed under 6. Parks and Recreation.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION (9:48 P.M. – 9:55 P.M.)

On a motion by CM Dennison and second by CM Almoguera the Council went into an executive session regarding a personnel matter. With matter discussed, CM Dennison moved and CM Almoguera seconded to end the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk

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